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AMERICAN LETTER
A YOUTH CLUB'S LEAD
AUSTRIA'S FILM FUTURE
NORTH AFRICAN NEWS

CONTRIBUTORS: Herman G. Weinberg
Elizabeth Cross
Winifred Holmes
Michael S. Hawton
Frank E. Farley

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Sight and Sound

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Mild or Bitter?

asks Winifred Holmes

It is a fallacy to think that people are bound to get on if they meet in the flesh. Often it is better to leave the ocean between them. The Americans and British present a particularly difficult problem not only because of past mistrust and the difference in their respective Army rates of pay, but because of their shared language. To be able to speak only Polish, Czech, Dutch or Norwegian, with only a few words of English, imposes a tentativeness of approach which is endearing to the king-of-the-castle British.

The Homesick Doughboy

But the American doughboy, with his command of the same language (with variations), feeling homesick, out of place, and covering it up by "fluffing out his feathers and uttering strange cries", as a shrewd Canadian said of himself during his own first days over here, too often acts like the new boy who shows off. And like the bumptious new boy he makes a false start which is hard to live down.

Good manners is the very simple secret of success in getting on friendly terms with the nationals of a foreign country, but good manners—approach, first impressions,—the how and the how-not-to are not simple. Let us be honest. The Americans, for all our common use of English are more foreign to us in manners than our fellow-Europeans.

The M.O.I. for making, the War Office for presenting, and the American Army for accepting the film, *A Welcome to Britain* affirm their mutual recognition of the importance of this problem in manners. No amount of non-visuals—talks by the C.O., booklets, articles, radio propaganda—could have the same impact as this spirited and tactful film on the newcomer from

Texas or Idaho, who most likely has never met a specimen of the British race before.

The film is full of invention, wit and clever devices for getting across its moral. In technique it owes a good deal to the pre-war French cinema. Burgess Meredith, intelligent recruit to the cinema from the Little Theatre movement of America, is sent out by the Allied generals at the port of arrival to "meet the British". He is to find out for himself how to get along with them and what sort of welcome his fellow-soldiers may expect, and tell them of his findings.

Behaviour

From then on flit with him in picaresque fashion from country pub (how to make friends with the locals) to bombed ruins and a meal with the warden and his wife (how not to indulge a hearty appetite on their week's rations); from a village school, with its elderly *Mr. Chips* who gives a useful lecture on the size and make-up of the British Isles; from battleschool ("we're not here for a picnic") to Red Cross dance in ancestral mansion (how to meet nice girls); from London taxi (how to make out their god-darned money) to restaurant (give up your dreams of clam-chowder and fried chicken Maryland and be content with a five-bob meal or American Army rations for—"this is the Army, Mr. Brown").

Meredith takes his way quietly, humorously, sometimes ruefully through the film, finding out most of what he wants to know and imparting it to the audience with a delightfully sly air of sharing a secret, so that even the touchiest must fail to be offended. It is a brilliant performance, backed by brilliant script-writing and direction.

But there is one question which beats him. The difference between mild and bitter. Well, here is one answer. In the country pub he leaves an atmosphere of mild friendliness behind him. The locals like him because he has approached them with tact and courtesy. But the other U.S. private, bumptious, back-slapping, called up to give an exhibition of how not to behave in an English pub, rouses only bitter hostility.

A Welcome to Britain has enough entertainment value to merit a general release. It would help us too to welcome and understand better the American soldiers in our midst. After seeing it I looked with far greater interest at those I saw in the street. I wondered how they were adjusting themselves; whether they felt very homesick; whether after being shown the film they were trying to behave as if they had been brought up to be reserved and self-effacing rather than to sell themselves, to make the quick impression they have been taught in their own land of high-powered salesmanship.

The Start

The process of Learning-about-the-British-Without-Tears starts way back in America with the Capra film, *Know your Ally, Britain*, which is shown to all troops before they embark. It is a good example of the closely-reasoned film argument held together by a strong simple one-man commentary which he has evolved as a documentary technique suitable for his purpose of informing the American soldier of the salient points about his enemies and his allies. *A Welcome to Britain* is a film of situations—the Capra film one of ideas.

It opens with the bald statement; "Of all our allies the most puzzling is *John Britain*". Come to think of it we probably are the most puzzling with our complexities and contradictions.

But it brings one up with a start to hear it put so bluntly.

It is a courageous film and a hard-hitting one. Capra takes the accepted American ideas of us and shows that they are only half the truth. We have our "Olde Worlde" towns and villages, but we have Sheffield, the Clyde, Lancashire. We have powerful Trades Unions, a more advanced social system than the United States. We have a king who rode to his coronation in an uncomfortable gilt coach, but unlike his early predecessors who used the same traditional pomp and ceremony, he makes no laws and collects no taxes. He is not the master but the symbol of the people.

The Common Heritage

But Capra wisely dwells on the important things we have in common—freedom of speech and religion, a democratically elected government. He makes too a remarkable historical survey of the events which slowly changed us from a peaceful drowsy lion to a dangerous aggressive beast. It is a concise and fair survey, particularly fair to us over the doubtful Munich period, and very complimentary over our lonely stand before Pearl Harbour. As in the *Battle of Britain* Capra the American can say things about us which we cannot say ourselves, not only because we are congenitally incapable of blowing our own trumpet but because we cannot see it all so clearly and objectively.

Courage was needed too for the frank way in which he has taken anti-British German propaganda by the throat and torn it to shreds with cold hard facts and figures.

Credit for this film, so closely packed, so intelligent in its arguments and sane in its conclusions, should also go to the research assistants, Capra's team, who must have spent many hours combing British film material and choosing just the most pertinent shots for their purpose.

After seeing both these films about Britain it is impossible not to ask the question, why have we not made films of the same type about our allies? It is as important for us to get on with the Americans, and to take pains to do so, as it is for the Americans to try and get along with us. We have other allies too

whom it would seem worth trying to understand better. In fact we should feel abashed that the potentialities of film for this purpose—adult education of a most vital kind—should not have been explored and put to a similar good use by our own authorities and first-rate documentary directors.

A Youth Club's Lead

by

A. SEYMOUR FRENCH

BOYS AND GIRLS between the ages of fourteen and twenty probably purchased one half of the total of 1,000 million cinema seats annually sold to the public in the years before the war. Therefore to all of us engaged in Youth-Work comes a direct challenge to widen the scope of our club programmes to admit Film Appreciation as an activity of equal importance to the coming generation as Art, Music and Physical Training.

I have, alas, often heard, at Youth-Leaders' conferences and at Training Courses, slighting references to those "odious Odeons", indicating not only a lack of reflection on the part of the speaker, but an almost complete lack of appreciation of this great new art form and its own peculiar function in the training and guidance of Youth. Boys and girls often have to be forced to attend Keep Fit classes, for their own wellbeing, yet because these same boys and girls frequent the cinema with unfailing regularity finding usually only harmless and uncreative amusement, their leaders tend to ignore the golden opportunity thus offered to them and merely suspect the commercial cinema of unfair competition. Perhaps, solely, because youth visits the cinema as often as it does the club, it is incumbent on the club leader to

cultivate a sense of right values in his members to offset the harmful effect of the screen-world of unreality and false glamour on the truly obsessed.

Boys' clubs are the public schools of the working boy. We must take full advantage of every available means to ensure the wellbeing of the coming generation. The screen in the club need never lower its cultural standards to attune itself with public taste. It has no box-office receipts to worry about. Neither is it ever hampered by high cost-of-production cares to diminish its value as an educational medium. Imagination boggles at the limits that might be imposed on the efficiency of the training of the Armed Forces by withholding the use of the projector. Can we afford therefore to ignore this important medium when our job, in clubs, is to promote the real happiness, born of knowledge and understanding in our members.

The need for approaching the cinema in the right attitude of mind, and the need for the cultivation of the faculty of criticism, is universal yet the ways to this end must of necessity be various.

The St. Marylebone Youth Committee has made a splendid contribution to the organisations in its area by purchasing an excellent sound projector

and placing it at the free disposal of its youth leaders, thus ensuring that Film Appreciation becomes part of the regular programme of "work-relational" activities in many clubs of that area.

A Tough Club

When this projector became available the Warden of Stowe Club which is situated in a very difficult quarter was quick to seize the opportunity of using films to accompany and illustrate a series of talks on life and politics in foreign countries, arranged previously. He found that the films gave added reality to the talks and that their significance was more readily absorbed because of the familiarity of the audience with the film medium. These talks were successful largely because of the accompanying films and caused the Warden, who had long been aware that many of the members of his club went to the Odeon on Saturday night only because they had been to the Regal and the Ritz earlier in the week, to form a Film Society in the club.

With the practical help and co-operation of the British Film Institute, and the National Film Library, he selected many films including *The Cabinet Of Dr. Caligari*, *Metropolis* and *War Is Hell*. The last was chosen because the Warden felt that we had at last reached a less bitter period of the war and that the growing generation, especially of his own particular area, needed to be gradually coaxed into a change of mood to facilitate the post-war reconstruction plans.

I was present at the showing of this film and readily testify to the necessity for a club leader choosing the films for his own particular club whether or not aided by his Boys' Committee. The film was introduced to the audience, largely comprising boys but with a sprinkling of girls, in a brief talk.

Using the historical approach first the Warden stressed the date of the making of the film, continuing biographically with a few notes on the

various actors and concluding with a word or two on technique, production and photography. To this introduction he added an open invitation to the members of the audience, asking them to contribute at some later date essays giving a description of their reactions to the film, which was then shown. The audience was unusually quiet throughout, seeing, so far as I could judge, not just another film but a slowly unfolding revelation of a real work of art. Feeling, too, for the first time probably that they, as audience, have no small part to play in their newly-discovered function of critics. When the film was ended there were some who said nothing, others who followed their customary practice of dismissing a film with a brief "Lousy!" or "Smashing!" and then forgetting all about it, and a small number taking notes to help them when writing the intended essay. But as far as I could see and again as far as I could judge, not one member of that by no means small gathering, had seen that film with the all too usual gaze of indulgence, which often rather resembles the attitude of a lone Chinaman to his pipe of opium.

An Appreciation

Of the few entries in the Essay competition I like the following particularly because it shows well-used powers of observation and more important still how stimulating can be a few well-chosen words of introduction. Written by a fourteen year old schoolboy it commences:

"This film was made in Germany during 1932 under the direction of a German and a Russian, and the effective incidental music was composed by Hans Eisler. The film-story begins in 1913, when the world is shown as a seething cauldron of speculation and fear, almost boiling over. The skies of peace are menaced by the thunderclouds of war. The stories of five individual men are shown, living in different European countries, pursuing humble

trades, little realising that they will be involved in the bloodiest war that had ever been. The typical Jewish tailor is seen at his marriage feast. In a short scene of general rejoicing amongst the guests, he slips quietly away to admire and caress his beloved sewing-machine. Next is seen a carefree Frenchman jostling among the crowds going to his daily work. Soon he strikes up a lively acquaintanceship with a vivacious French girl who upon leaving the bus accepts an invitation to dine. A harassed figure is seen silhouetted on a window overlooking the River Thames. The next scene shows the interior of the room where a nurse is telling the man that he has fathered a fine boy. A Negro tap-dancer is the fourth character shown as he performs before a typical Parisian audience. Suddenly the Marseillaise blares forth. The audience rises to its feet and joins in the singing of the National Anthem. The last character is a German carpenter in the slums surrounded by other craftsmen, his workshop overlooking a back-alley laundry. He leaves his bench to play with his son and a newly constructed toy-cannon, and kneeling down takes careful aim with the cannon.

"The next part of the film is seen dealing with the opening hysterical war scenes; the German carpenter is seen marching down to the barracks accompanied by his wife and son. As the tempo of the martial music quickens the mood of the marchers, as seen in the face of the wife changes from misery to joy. Soon all main characters are involved and fighting, in mud and misery. The plough which worked the land now stands idle while the carrion of war rests on its shaft; a multitude of crosses shows that war is reaping a rich harvest. Autumn leaves fall with the falling shells, symbols of death.

"We now reach the second half of the film in which the German carpenter is attempting to release the Jew who is

seen trapped by a beam from the roof of a derelict barn, partially destroyed by war. The barn now shelters the Frenchman suffering from shell-shock, as well as the trapped Jew and the German busily engaged in freeing him. Later, as distant gunfire is heard, the Jew is freed as the Negro enters with a wounded British officer. In the distance guns roar, war is no longer a hand-to-hand fight but one of mechanical methods with new forms of horror in the shape of the aeroplane and poison gas. The Frenchman asks the Jew what his nationality is, who to his horror finds that he has lost his speech. In this effective scene, the audience can, without a doubt, feel in themselves the utter loss of the Jew. The German in an effort to become better acquainted offers the Frenchman a cigarette and both try to comfort the Jew. Outside the guns battle fiercely with increasing tempo. The Negro, after having made the officer comfortable, with the use of his hands attempts to become friendly with the Jew, perhaps because they have a thing in common, having both been persecuted and used as scapegoats. The occupants of the barn settle to cooking, and carrying out repairs where needed. After the meal the Negro asks, "Why are we at war? Have any of us done great wrongs?" The Jew after considering the statement, says, "The French did not want war," after a period of consideration there is a general agreement, realising the folly and uselessness of war. Following renunciation of war they fling away their rifles

"To conclude this essay, I shall say that although there was not a complete understanding on the part of all the audience owing to more than one language being used, they certainly went home with the conviction that war really is hell."

The Film Appreciation group at Stowe Club is still in its infancy but as

time passes a magnificent opportunity to continue and expand the interest of the group should come when instead of solely appraising the merits of the finished product, the quality of the individual ingredients can be analysed, the use of the camera and the use of sound.

The formation of Film Study groups in all clubs can of itself alone help to raise the present somewhat prosaic level of films by the growth of the

power of criticism and discernment in their members. The job of the Club-Leader is not to put the cinema "out-of-bounds for the under sixteen", as I once heard sincerely uttered, but to foster a taste that one day will demand and receive something better than hitherto.

As a result of what has been done by Stowe four others clubs in Paddington and St. Marylebone have formed Film Groups.

North African News

from Michael S. Hawton, R.A.F.

MY EXPERIENCE differs from that of my "oppo" in Iceland in that it seems an awful long time since I was sitting in a comfortable and, I might almost say, civilised cinema, seeing films in that happy frame of mind which is induced by the amenities.

Since I last dropped in to my local, I have seen not so much many films, as films in many places. There was a standard cinema, for example, on the boat, when I came out. Under adverse conditions, I saw *The Great Dictator* for the third time, and *In The Navy* for the second. It took the whole trip to show these two programmes to the multitudes on board. In each case, they were backed with an instructional on the mosquito, which was well constructed, and though it was laughed at then, later on men began to think of the dodges shown when they heard the high pitched little dive bombers at work.

I have seen one or two of the open air shows which very occasionally come round. Once they showed us

Desert Victory, which I have now seen twice. Most of the men seemed to appreciate it, both as a picture, and as a record of their own achievements, though there were parts where they raised a derisive shout. *Malta Convoy* indeed had an effect on the men of Malta which I quail to describe. In the Air Force we have a word for that sort of thing!

At other times I have found myself in those cities of North Africa of which you have so often heard, and so often seen pictured, and I have wandered into the cinemas. The French cinemas usually seem to hold two sessions a day, one at 12.30, and one at 6.30. Both are very well patronised. It is always necessary to book in advance for the second performance. Prices are very reasonable, and the best seats, even when booked in advance, are only the equivalent of 1s. 6d. Programmes are mostly American films, largely about the war, such as *Sgt. York*. I have also had the chance to see *The Great Dictator* for the fourth time!

Poor Quality

Many of the films are very efficiently dubbed into a French version, though others have French subtitles. There are also some original French pictures, such as *La Bête Humaine*, which I saw not so long ago, and *Nuit De Decembre*, of which I had not previously heard, but which I enjoyed greatly. It had many touches which were reminiscent of the beauty of *Carnet De Bal*. I saw this in a small French cinema which was well filled with the local populace, and I was spared the clanking of Army boots, and men arriving, barging in at half-time, and behaving noisily, (especially at the more French parts) which are the troubles incumbent on a visit to the English speaking films, which draw thousands of the English and American Army. The programme contained a French newsreel, and a short about a circus which was rather primitive, especially compared to the *finesse* of the main picture. The projection was fairly good, the arcs only faded out once! Sadly inadequate illumination is a very great shortcoming in nearly all the cinemas. The sound too appears to suffer from insufficient wattage, and the bass notes are forced, due apparently largely to the use of full volume all the time.

In Tunis, the largest cinema has been taken over to show English speaking films to the Allied Forces. Certainly it is well patronised, evidenced by long queues, and it is fairly comfortable as compared to most of the other cinemas, though the programmes sometimes savour of military abruptness. A certain wisdom is shown in having a large proportion of musicals, for they are undoubtedly those of widest appeal, and give rest to men who are mentally dulled, and who seek light relief from warfare.

A Curious Experience

In Algiers, the town having been

less affected by the fighting than elsewhere, they often run four houses a day, but I remember they had as usual some odd French transcription which bore little relation to the original. The particular cinema I visited was showing an American musical, dubbed to French, except for the songs, and much hacked about. The sound was poor. The lighting very inadequate, and the hall long, rather narrow, and very dark so that the picture seemed miles away. I had a curiously detached sensation as I watched the film, which I had seen once before a long while ago. I felt as though I was watching a rough cut film, and the makers were critically watching it, giving ideas on the cutting. Little sequences sprang into being and then disappeared. In fact the film seemed divided like the chapters of a book. I had visions of the script, and someone saying: "I think we could shorten that a bit!" It had that falsity that ones own creations seem to have at first showing due, I suppose, to the way the film had been messed about. It certainly felt odd at the time. You can see therefore why I am looking forward to seeing pictures in English theatres, whose imperfections I feel I shall never notice again.

Engineers at Work, by H. F. Dance [Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 10s. 6d.] is a series of accounts in simple language of great engineering feats, such as the Mersey Tunnel, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and so forth. For educational folk one interesting feature of the book is that the shape of a very large number of the line illustrations has been conceived so that they can be turned into film slides and film strips without further ado. If the publishers are enterprising they might well issue a film strip or strips to accompany the book and thus perhaps obtain a greater circulation in junior technical schools and elsewhere.

AMERICAN LETTER*

from

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

FOUR FILMS ABOUT DEATH. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* reaches its paroxysm in the last fusillade of Robert Jordan's machine gun which will bring the fascists upon him, lying there with his shattered leg. *North Star* hollows out your stomach with a serene sky out of which roars the drone of Stukas flying higher than the eye can see so that the sky is, withal, serene. *Flesh and Fantasy* is the premonition we have once had, and shall have again, that something terrible will happen to us. And *The Battle for Russia*, for all its virtuosity of cutting, is not more than strips of film pasted together that records man at his foulest.

FOUR FILMS ABOUT LIFE. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* could at the very least have reviled the *cretin* Franco, but we mustn't hurt Spain's feelings. It could have been an affirmation of life by calling the people of Spain "Loyalists", which is what they were, loyal to the popularly elected government, not the cowardly and hedging "Republicans"; and it could have called the *canaille* of Franco what they were—fascists—and not the mellifluous and utterly without truth "Nationalists". But we mustn't hurt Spain's feelings. Is, then, "fascist" so odious a word? Too odious, indeed, to be weighed in balance against the blood spilled by American soldiers in Africa and Italy because the Spanish "civil war" was not our affair? Too odious to be weighed in balance against dollars that might still be gotten out of Spain if we *didn't* call the rapists

of Spain fascists? Hemingway, at least, spat at Franco and his verminous offspring in his book. He may well do likewise on the film. Read to a soldier who has been blinded at El Alamein or who has had a leg amputated from a booby trap in Sicily the scenario of Paramount's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Pretty-Pretty

North Star. A pretty name for a Russian village. Everything is pretty. Did I forget to buy a libretto for this operetta in the lobby before the performance? Is the music by Kalman or Lehar? But no, this isn't Hungary, these aren't comic-opera gypsies—this is supposed to be Russia. Maybe it's for contrast—to heighten the brutality of the Nazi invasion which is to follow. But if I didn't believe the scenes of happiness, how can I believe the scenes of sorrow? Why do they do this? Why do they exaggerate? Why do they falsify? Why do they show me scenes in which there is a "rational" explanation for Nazi bestiality, such as the blood-letting of Russian children to save the lives of badly wounded German soldiers? *And why do they show me no other scenes of Nazi bestiality?* A child is killed by an indiscriminate bomb. A girl is shot because she was a guerilla. All right, that is war, this foetid thing spewed by Nazism that we have to dignify by the term of war. But there have been no atrocities for which even a Nazi would have no rational explanation? *There Have Been None??* It is not

* We apologise for the fact that Mr. Weinberg's contributions have been missing from the last two numbers. The U.S. mail however has been very irregular.

enough to show a Nazi physician who despises his unfortunate task. *It Is Not Enough!!* What are they trying to prove?

Flesh and Fantasy. In America right now there is a popular phrase—"out of this world". It's used to describe the voice of Frank Sinatra or a gown or the kisses of your best girl. It can describe *Flesh and Fantasy* also. At another time, this would be an intriguing film. Come to think of it, as an "escapist" film (we're always trying to "escape"), it's miles above the Hollywood average. At least, the mantle of *ennui* doesn't descend on us with the main and credit titles as is the case with most "escapist" films. Julien Duvivier once made an episodic film in France called *Un Carnet de Bal* that was a masterpiece of disillusion. He has never gotten over it, and well he might not have, for this was a superb delineation of people for whom life had turned into ashes. He tried to revivify the formula in *Lydia* and failed miserably; he tried again in *Tales of Manhattan*, and nothing could be less believable than that hodge-podge of coincidences dragged in by the scruff of the neck. He's still trying with *Flesh and Fantasy*, which he co-produced with Charles Boyer. Three episodes, by Wilde, the Hungarian Vadnay, and an American Ellis St. Joseph. Have you a beautiful soul? Then you are physically beautiful. Do you believe in fortune-tellers? That is bad, for you will be obsessed to the end of your days. Do you have premonitions? So you have premonitions. The same things that happened to the aerialist in the film who had premonitions happen to people who don't have them. So what? But the Wildean moral of the first episode is touching, if it wouldn't have been so Hollywoodized (I find Wilde always touching), and the psychological effect of reading "murderer!" in a man's palm which obsesses the man until he *does* commit murder is tricky and clever and so very Hungarian, while

the final episode of the tight-rope walker who, for no reason at all, sees himself falling against a girl's scream, kept reminding me disconcertingly of that immeasurably superior moment of *Variety* when *Boss Huller*'s manager has to leave the *Wintergarten* because he knows that the aerialist, whose girl was seduced by his partner in the act, is planning to "accidentally on purpose" let him go hurtling to the floor. Besides all of which, the thread of apology for the whole thing, in the person of the Benchly interludes, is like saying to a child, "There, there, I was only making believe—see, it was all in fun!" They might just as well have appointed pretty usherettes to hold our hands, during the film's showing. And to promise us consolation with the usherettes, afterwards.

Realism

The Battle for Russia. Produced by Lt. Col. Frank Capra. Edited by (I've forgotten his rank) Anatole Litwak. All things that you will do, that you are and will be, for the duration, are related in terms of this film, not because this is the last word on the subject of what we are fighting against, but because it will do as a symbol to whom the war is still something they wouldn't know about if they didn't read the papers, listen to the radio or even go to the cinema. I know, only too well, as does everyone here, this doesn't apply to the people of Britain. It certainly applies to most of us here. It was made to show to our soldiers, as a part of the "face of the enemy" series. I do not think you will see it in England. It is a compilation of scenes from the Stalingrad, Leningrad and Moscow defence films produced by Russian cameramen during those campaigns. There are fragments of captured Nazi films in it, too. Anyway, the point is that this is a sort of synthesis of what the Russians have been up against.

New York.

December, 1943

FILM MUSIC

discussed by John Huntley

IN THE DAYS of the silent film, especially at the beginning, music was largely employed to blot out the noise from the projector. Film music began in the dingy surroundings of show booths and shop fronts as did the film itself. However, the noisy projector was soon suitably enclosed in a sound proof compartment, so this ceased to be a motive for the music.

As Kurt London puts it, the main motive is undoubtedly "the rhythm of the film as an art of movement". We are not used to observing movement in an artistic form, he says, without some accompanying sound. And to break the silence of the first twenty-five years of motion pictures, music was essential.

Silent Period

For a quarter of a century the general public heard music on a scale rarely equalled before or since. Every type was called into service to provide the film art with its third dimension—the rhythm of movement. And so the public heard a lot of semi-classical music for the first time, even if it was unconsciously. But no serious contribution to music appeared during the whole of the silent film era. Even though Chaplin did a few original scores, and most countries attempted specially written film music, but the technical difficulties were insurmountable.

The coming of the sound film at first brought even greater artistic nullity than before and for the first three or four years a mighty theme song wave swept through movieland with devastating results. "All talking, all singing, all dancing" was, if any-

thing, an ever greater factor in the cinematic depression of the early 1930's than the economic chaos that reigned in the outside world.

It was about 1934 when Kurt Schroeder, then musical director of the newly formed "London Films" under Alexander Korda, retired to make way for one Muir Mathieson. Now 32, Mathieson has devoted all his life to film music; a student of the Royal College of Music he argued that if British films were to have the best stars, the best directors and the best cameramen, they should also have the best composers and the best musicians. Korda agreed and from then on British film music was put on a solid basis. The London Symphony did the recording and men like Bliss, Walton, Bax and Vaughan Williams wrote it.

First Fruits

He got results and in 1935 we saw the first fruits when Arthur Bliss, one of the modern British symphonic composers after Elgar, whose work has remained so lively and up to date, wrote the score for the H. G. Wells epic *Things to Come*. Here for the first time in twenty-five years was motion picture music that was accepted by the concert hall audience, the "highbrows", who so far had scorned the motion picture as an art form.

As a concert suite Bliss's music won fame; 1935 marked the beginning of a new music—the music of the screen—modern, progressive, offering new possibilities and new scope for experiments. Talking it over with music lovers I doubt if any film music before or since has made such an impression.

In the same year another modern

English composer, William Walton, entered the cinema with a score for *Escape Me Never* featuring Elizabeth Bergner. Since then Walton has been writing regularly for the screen for films such as *Next of Kin*, *Major Barbara*, *The Foreman went to France*, and a great many other first class productions. One of his latest works, "Spitfire Prelude and Fugue" from *The First of the Few*, is among his finest scores and, despite wartime restrictions on raw materials, H.M.V. have issued a disc of this piece arranged as a concert suite and played by the Halle Orchestra conducted by William Walton. It has received the approval of the critics and Walton is to-day perhaps our most consistent and brilliant film composer.

Vaughan Williams's Works

Only since the war has Vaughan Williams composed screen music, for two of our best war films—*49th Parallel* and *Coastal Command*, both examples of the new documentary style so successfully developed in the last two years. This great contemporary composer has done much to enhance the new art, but although we were more or less promised a commercial record of *49th Parallel* none has so far turned up.

The case of Richard Addinsell is one of the oddest in film music annals. For years his scores for famous British movies like *Gaslight*, *Good-bye Mr. Chips*, *The Lion has Wings*, *Contraband* and many others were recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra in collaboration with Muir Mathieson, and passed unnoticed. The film *Dangerous Moonlight* called for a rather special composition to be a vital part of the plot, and for this he wrote the "Warsaw Concerto". It was a tremendous hit with the public, and it undoubtedly served its purpose in the film. It has not been accepted to any extent by the serious music minds of this country due,

perhaps, to its lack of any real individuality.

Many claim it as a direct imitation of Rachmaninoff, others as Chopin or Sibelius and so on. It is not Addinsell's best work, and I would instance "They Sail at Midnight" as a vastly superior score, but it made the general public film music conscious in a big way and this alone is sufficient to justify its careful consideration in any review of this kind.

Michael Spoliansky gave a recital of his film music not so long ago, for he too worked on a number of London Film Productions such as *The Ghost Goes West* and *Don Juan*; he also gave us some fine Paul Robeson songs for films such as *King Solomon's Mines*.

Other Composers

Sir Arnold Bax is no newcomer to the studios either; his score for *Malta G.C.* has received a number of public performances apart from greatly enhancing the film tribute to the George Cross Island. Other eminent composers have also turned to the film for new possibilities, among them William Alwyn (*Desert Victory*, *Squadron Leader X*, *They Flew Alone*, *Escape to Danger*, etc.), Benjamin Britten, Greenwood, Lambert, Leigh and numerous others whose film music will, I believe, be one day drawn from its obscurity in the celluloid vaults and performed as representative works of our time.

Turning now to the developments abroad, Hollywood naturally springs to the mind first. The mass production centre of movies has not yet reached the same standard as this country in original composition film music. Good work has been done by people like Max Steiner, Aaron Copland and Wolfgang Gorngold, and some of their music has been publicly performed, but as yet no recordings have reached this country.

Of the theme song and musical comedy type of music, however, they

are way out in front, and in the field of swing, boogie-woogie, solid four, hepping and jiving they have no serious competition, but we are mainly concerned with the music that forms an integral part of a film and not so much with the theme song, always a separate entity from the filmic pattern.

American Music

Of the important American scores which I enjoyed very much, Max Steiner's *The Informer* and *Dr. Erhlich's Magic Bullet*, Aaron Copland's *Our Town*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The City*, Meredith Wilson's *The Great Dictator* along with all the Chaplin films, and Wolfgang Gorn-gold's *Sea Hawk* and *Juarez* come to mind, but generally speaking the Americans are too fond of that incessant characterless, meaningless "background" music which is merely an annoyance. That technical colossus *Gone with the Wind*, hailed as the highest achievement of Hollywood technicians if nothing else, failed in this respect, and to quote the trade's own newspaper *The Cinema*:

"We fail to understand the insistence upon music as an atmospheric help when sound effects are much more realistic; the almost continuous musical accompaniment is intrusive and unnecessary as destructive of conviction and tending to encourage a sense of staginess."

There is, however, the one exception: Walt Disney. In his work we find the best, most perfect use of the musical film to-day, for the cartoon combines the rhythm of music with the rhythm of movement into one entity. The music governs the whole tempo and mood of every shot; it gives life to the mechanical drawings of an artist's imagination.

The introduction of theme songs has increased their popularity but has not improved them musically. However, there is always a great deal of enjoyment to be had from all

Disney's work and I never consider that I have really seen even a Disney short until after some five or six viewings to examine completely the draughtmanship, imagination and primarily, the music.

Whatever your own views on *Fantasia*, this ambitious, costly, partial-flop partial-achievement, was something pretty important in movie music. Although not entirely original (Oscar Fischinger's shorts were on the same lines, and even the amateurs of this country showed a cartoon version of *Danse Macabre* in, I think, 1939 at Film House), it was new to the general public. It got a mixed reception. When I saw it in Blackpool, I could barely hear the music for the bellowing and shouting of an August holiday crowd who could detect no similarity between "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring."

Fantasia's Effect

But a lot of people heard good music on a large scale for the first time, and I know personally of ardent swing fans who discovered that "there was something in this classical stuff" as a result of seeing *Fantasia*. With all its faults, *Fantasia* has, in my opinion, well justified itself, and even if Beethoven does turn in his grave when Disney goes all coy and babies' bottoms in the *Pastoral Symphony*, it is still as good a recording as I have heard. Even the ack-ack fire in *Toccata and Fugue* may be excused to listen to the Stokowski orchestration, and Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice never fails to please. So on the whole I have found *Fantasia* a widely enjoyed film with the music lovers, and while not all the jazz addicts could assimilate "Whistle While You Work" and "Night on the Bare Mountain" with equal ease, it won many friends among those who previously had little appreciation of the classics.

Russian Influences

It is not surprising that such a strongly film conscious nation as Russia has made big advances in film music. Successful experiments in film opera and ballet (as well as original composition) have been made and the film *Russian Salad* gained considerable success over here.

Most Russian composers of the day have tried their hand at studio work in recent years. Shostakovich has made an excellent short film of one of his compositions as well as writing a number of scores. Even his famous "Leningrad Symphony" is heard as the background music in the film *Russian Guerillas* recently shown in London. This particular work is also being considered as the subject of a separate full length film.

Alexandrov and Prokofiev are both experienced studio men, and examples of their music were performed at the Promenade concerts this year in London, including Prokofiev's "Alexander Nevsky" music, so effective in the famous Eisenstein film. A commercial recording is available in the Columbia catalogue.

During my talk I found much interest aroused in Warner Bros.' two ballet films, *The Gay Parisian* and *Spanish Fiesta*, filmed in Technicolor with Massine and the Ballet Russe. Both films have been very successful and have created wide scope for discussion on the film as a medium for ballet.

But it is in the field of original composition that the main interest lies to-day. I know now that one day this almost unknown work of Addinsell, Walton, Steiner, Vaughan Williams and Bax will take its place among the major musical developments of the twentieth century. Richard Addinsell once wrote me a letter in which he said, "I enjoy working for films very much but occasionally after a specially hard job, one can't help wondering if anyone

listens or notices certain passages in a score that have been the cause of particular trouble or excitement in the making, for unlike the theatre where you can watch and gauge an audience reaction, the cinema, as far as the music is concerned, remains for ever an unknown quantity." In the course of my lectures I have learnt a lot about that "unknown quantity", it will not always remain so.

The Solution

Many people are already applying the solution. If you buy a record of a new work, you don't play it once and scrap it. You listen to it a number of times to obtain the full meaning and enjoyment from it, to appreciate the work of the woodwinds, the brass, the strings. Yet people are quite happy to see a film just once and forget all about it.

Of course, so many films are not worth even the one viewing, but there are some, those pictures we always hope for when we pay our 1s. 6d. at the box office, that are good. Now I can't expect to appreciate a film score at one screening unless it is something very special. I am too interested in the story, and if it is a good score I shall not hear it consciously. But my enjoyment of the movie as such will be vastly increased.

A good film is made up of many component parts, as is a good symphony, and in the same way as I listen to a good symphony many times, so I fail to see why we don't see a good film many times. Once to enjoy the story, once to appreciate the technical qualities, and once for the music.

And this is precisely what the film music lovers are doing. Seeing the really good films many times instead of a lot of mediocre stuff just once. It is the answer to a new understanding of motion pictures and it is the only way in which the new music, the exciting original compositions of the screen will become more widely appreciated.

The Camera's Share

by Sidney and Muriel Argent

THIS IS the substance of an actual film appreciation talk given under two conditions that are likely to prove fairly common. First, there was little money, so films were obtained only from the Central Film Library and the British Film Institute. Postage apart, films cost nothing from the Central Film Library and comparatively little from the British Film Institute. Second, those who listened to the talk and watched the films were not students in any sense of the word. They were simply people seeking recreation but preferring it to be enlightening as long as it was not dull.

Two Points of View

When we go to the theatre to see real actors, we choose our seat and so decide for the rest of the evening the angle at which we see the performers and the scale on which they appear. If the theatre is a big one, our decision makes a material difference to what we see. But the biggest theatre cannot provide the range of differences that can be found in any cinema, though here we have practically no power of selection, if badly placed front and side seats are left out of account. Only the unwinding film will reveal the scale and the angle of our entertainment. We may look at an approaching train from the track and see it grow from a speck to a terrifying mass filling the screen and roaring over us. We may see an army moving over a distant hill, or a single soldier grinning at arm's distance.

How much we expect this variable vision in the cinema may be seen if we look at a film made forty years ago before present technique had developed. The film is called *Voyage Across*

the Impossible, brilliant for its but unsatisfying to contemporary eyes. It tells of the adventures of an inventor on inaccessible mountain tops, high in the air and far beneath the sea. We shall see that its view point is fixed. Apart from one or two trick scenes with cut-out, people and scenery remain more or less at a constant scale and at a fixed angle of vision with ourselves. Here is the film. It comes from the National Film Library.

Stage not Cinema

I think we cannot escape the feeling that the sides and top of the screen represent the proscenium arch of a stage. The workshop, the railway booking hall, the alpine heights, the interior of the sun, the depths of the sea, all seem calculated to go nicely round stage-size figures. And stage-size they remain, not diminishing as they progress to the uttermost parts of the heavens, not increasing as they return to surface life on this planet. In view-point also the characters are seen as they would be on the stage, face foremost. Near the end of the film, the returned adventurers are being welcomed by a crowd, and the director has given them a half-turn—familiar to the stage—to enable them to face both the crowd behind them and the audience in front of them. In a modern film this scene might have been taken over the backs of the crowd; or the camera might have shot first the welcomers then the welcomed, and the two shots have been shown in succession; or a bird's eye view of both together might have been given. And if the film does occasionally show a profile or a back view, yet still the camera turns at head level. We don't look up at the inventor's

party rocketing to the stars, or down as they plunge beneath the waves. At the beginning of the film, property men disguised as engineers push a newly invented submarine in front of the workshop set, there to display it. Even so half of it is left out of the picture, so that it seems to project into view from the wings. Such a hold had the theatre on the outlook of the maker of the film!

By twenty years later much has been learnt of camera technique. This is shown by *The Last Laugh* a part of which we can see now. This part contains a simple but complete story. An ageing hotel commissionaire returns to work one morning to find his place taken by a younger man. He learns however that he is not dismissed but only demoted. He is sent below stairs as a lavatory attendant.

A Sensitive Use

The camera is used very sensitively. The commissionaire is first seen close to in the street while he approached the hotel. He crosses the road. We stay behind with the camera. He looks small against the traffic and against the big buildings on the other side. He enters the hotel through glass swing doors. Then we go inside too and find he is still coming in. Slowly he pushes the revolving wings, their upper part and his head and shoulders alone visible. Suddenly he halts, peers out through the glass. Another man is in his place on the pavement, dressed like him, but younger, more upright. We look through the glass with him. He decides to go out and investigate, starts the swing doors in motion again, reaches the pavement and moves towards the younger man. We stay inside looking at the diminishing figure of the old man. It looks as though an altercation is about to develop. So we are more comfortable where we are; besides, it is raining. Before the new commissionaire can be made aware of his predecessor's presence, a page-boy hurries

out and leads the old man back to answer a summons to the manager's office. Through the glass we see man and boy getting bigger as they approach. They pass the camera in the vestibule.

The next shot is taken from outside the glass door of the manager's office. On the inside, a bright fire burns in the grate and the manager is at his desk near it. Just inside the door, closer to us and to our sympathy, stands the humble figure of the displaced commissionaire. The manager, small in perspective has a remoteness from us and an indifference—it seems—to the suffering of his subordinate. We cannot hear the crackling of the fire, the scratching of the manager's pen or the heavy breathing of the old man, because we are in the quiet vestibule. And the film is a silent one. Yet when the camera takes us inside the glass door the effect is to suggest all the sounds we could not hear before.

The Mobile Camera

We have a closer view of the commissionaire now, and as he learns of his relegation to a menial position, we move closer still until the screen is filled with a dumbfounded face. This is right, for such a climax calls for as close a view as possible of what most reveals it, namely the old man's face and eyes. A sudden resolution comes to him and he determines to show that he is not a weakling despite appearances. He tries to pick up a heavy trunk waiting to be carried out, but collapses under the load. He sprawls exhausted on the floor, and the camera tilts down at his ignominy. We look down at him, down on him.

There is much more of such artistry, but what has been mentioned will serve to show the power of a mobile camera. In *The Last Laugh* it is very subtly used. In the next film, or rather film extract *The Ghost That Never Returns* (B), the movements are more obvious but more daring. The film

shows the feelings of anxiety and suspense and excitement that possess a convict just before and just after his temporary discharge.

The convict is first seen in his cell (American fashion with front entirely of bars). He is full length and in medium shot. As his feelings become worked up we approach closer and closer, until we see only enormous views of his eyes, his lips, his hands. He works himself into a kind of delirium, and we look at him from the ceiling and see him in plan, his round cap, and shoulders projecting beyond, a kind of mad foreshortening. Then we find that we are looking through his wild eyes at this corner of the cell: that corner—the floor—the ceiling . . .

Visual Psychology

At last he is released from prison and from this painful tumult. We watch him walking hesitant, emotionally tentative, between the high prison walls that lead to the outer world. Suddenly he swings round and faces the way he has come. He shouts curses at the distant prison. Suddenly we find ourselves looking at him through the prison gates, and the bars across the picture are the symbol of what he is cursing. Through them he seems a remote and somewhat helpless figure. Another access of feeling seizes him: he is free! Still through the bars we see him throw up his hat, kick it, jump, wave his arms and look for all the world like a tiny marionette on strings. Indeed on strings, for if his jailors' plans go well he will be back in prison within twenty-four hours or else a dead man.

So far the programme has consisted of silent films. The coming of sound reduced camera mobility in ordinary story films, because it turned producers' minds to dialogue and so back to theatrical standards. But in the best sound films today, the camera has regained much of its freedom. A good ex-

ample is the documentary, *Under the City*. Its purpose is to show the world of wires beneath the pavement, and the disturbance caused there if street works are undertaken.

Camera Angle

The screen announces *Under the City* and yet the first shot shows some birds wheeling in the sky, and the next shot the dome of St. Paul's. Is it a joke? No, merely a viewpoint from which to take a look round and particularly a look down. We see the circle of traffic in Piccadilly a long way below. We take a closer view. We go inside an office nearby, and look up at an electric light overhead, seek out the switch at eye-level, follow the wiring down the wall, through the floor, beneath the street. We examine a telephone in the same way, and this being a G.P.O. film it is the telephone we are chiefly interested in. The sinking of a new escalator shaft is setting a problem to the G.P.O. wire men, and we watch them solving it. The wires run in bundles carefully wrapped and sealed, and they have to make a detour round the shaft. Some of the bundles have to be undone, lengthened and sealed up again. We see the workmen doing this, and go close so that they are all heads and hands, sometimes only hands. We see the wires in detail, until one magnificent shot appears wherein magnifying lens makes them look like the groping tentacles of a sea anemone. We also see the men who are sinking the escalator shaft and look up or down at them at dizzy angles.

This is an original and an aesthetic film, its freedom of approach helped by the absence of dialogue. It is a film of action. On the other hand the distinction of *The Last Laugh* and *The Ghost That Never Returns* is that they are psychological studies conceived in visual terms that allow us, that is the camera, to go where we will. And this is essential to good cinema.

Large as Life—Twice as Natural

by ELIZABETH CROSS

THERE IS an old and famous story about the painter Turner who, when told that his critic had never seen such sunsets, remarked, "But don't you wish you had?" . . . just in the same spirit I feel we ought to regard the movies and look to them to provide that extra something that daily life hasn't got. And I don't mean glamour only (for we have been richly provided for when it comes to streamlined dames and trains), but wads of rich, thick, juicy emotion. Yes, lovely, pleasant laughter and, also pleasant, a good cry!

Talkie v. Silent

On the whole, the screen, since it fell into bad ways with the advent of the talkies, has been generous enough with horrors, with the creeps, with very, very boring wisecracking comics but has done amazingly little when it comes to downright shameless, sob-stuff. Once upon a time you could hear the silent film shows gurgling with tears. In *Way Down East* and *Broken Blossoms* and *Oliver Twist* the audience sniffed and gulped at all the right intervals and came out feeling a lot better. Somehow or other directors came over all self-conscious and tried to take over the sophistication of the stage and left the simple uplift in the dustbin. This is a pity because, for better or worse, films must appeal more to the emotions than to the intellect and it's high time someone realised this and made the best of it. The directors know this, definitely, for haven't they cashed in on sex until it's more than part worn? but they seem to have forgotten that there are other feelings worth cultivating.

However, here and there, comes a glimmering of hope, a sign that the film people are beginning to realise

some of the facts of life. For the benefit of those who haven't got very far yet perhaps I can make these a little clearer.

The Public

The cinema audience is made up of vast quantities of people who want to be happy and also want to be good. They are interested in life and death and how to get along with their neighbours, how to earn a living and also how to enjoy life. They wonder whether money matters much (they know that lack of it matters, all right). They wonder how they should bring up their children. They wonder about the poor and the unemployed and they feel guilty about a lot of the problems of life. They are curious, yet they aren't energetic enough to read very much, and they want the leisure of their often dull lives filled up with substitute excitement. They would like to be able to think, so if you can make them feel first, they may start thinking and arguing afterwards. So what?

Well, forget some of the conventions and the rules of movie making, cut out some of the obvious comedy stuff and let up a little on the murders and the bombing. (So few of us seem to get involved in murders and practically everyone must have been bombed by now, so it fails to thrill.) Instead, take any story going and exaggerate it emotionally and photographically . . . so that the wicked are bad if you like but clarified so we get some idea of the why . . . and the good are given the twists we know are there, the weaknesses that make them human. Now and then you come across a painting that catches your breath and makes you say, "So it is!" and you see with

new eyes the ripeness of corn and the significance of it too. That should be possible and more than possible in cinematography, and now and then it does happen and opens up truly fresh worlds to thousands of people who never go near an art gallery.

By the way I'm not throwing any free bouquets to Mr. Orson Welles, but maybe I misjudge him, as the only picture of his I've seen is *The Magnificent Ambersons* which had such a lousy story that I defy the Archangel Gabriel (presuming he goes in for that sort of thing) to make a good movie from it.

No, don't think art consists in making dark shots so that you aren't sure of what's coming or going, nor having folk stand around with plenty of naked branches against the sky in the best French manner, that seems to be much too simple.

Samples

Now, to come out with examples of what has been done and how, and set everyone howling and crying shame! Well, there's "The Human Comedy" which for sheer unadulterated shameless slop I give first prize. I haven't shed so many tears in years, my face was streaky when I emerged and my handkerchief damper than when I disgraced the family at "Owd Bob" when the Alsatian had to be shot by his loving master, So that shows you! It was so well done that you would have to be the deepest villain to sneer, and the most inhuman, for in addition to absolutely wholesome and charming looking characters, you have cleverly calculated music to break down the cynics, defences and above all, the most innocent of children. The very smallest child, who is quite the most real thing I've ever seen on the screen, provides some of the most beautifully photographed scenes. One particularly breathless sequence is when he is watching a little animal

burrowing in the back yard, then glances up at a dove in the branches, then watches the animal again. You feel, strongly, that you are getting the chance to see this child and to share his absorbed interest, without him knowing you are there at all, and that, because of this chance you know more about children and their eager curiosity than you ever knew before. The same effect occurs when the child is suddenly scared by a mechanical man in a shop window, there is a half pleasant thrill of horror with the child as he screams and runs away, then, when he is safe again and says, joyfully, "I'm afraid, I'm afraid," realising that he was, well everyone laughs with relief and say to themselves, "Yes, children are like that."

Writers Wanted

This picture, with its moralisings and innocent, unselfconscious goodness, is touching and naïve and just what the doctor ordered. Let's have some more. The same quality, though less plastered on with a trowel, is evident in *Tales of Manhattan* (a film that is badly titled and misleadingly reviewed). This picture has been recommended round enthusiastically and people who shun the cinema have, on being forced inside, admitted that they would hate to have missed it. It is different, but why didn't someone mention the fact? It has also the quality of sentiment that should be present in the cinema, but that is yet so rare. To hark back a long way we must say that *Mr. Deeds* also had the quality but in a more subtle manner.

On the whole it seems we do need better writers for the films, not so much to concoct plots as to create characters and situations and put over ideas that touch the heart. Charles Dickens had the right idea when he settled into writing his serial stories, he wasn't afraid of slapping on the colours, so why not let us follow his example?

Mr. Frank E. Farley writes :

SIR,

I am impelled to comment upon Mr. Fairgrieve's short article in the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND and also upon a similar contribution by Mr. Gillett to an earlier issue.

Both writers made statements to the effect that they would like to insist upon teachers becoming proficient in the use of still pictures as aids to teaching before being allowed to employ films in the classroom. In so far that the illustration of lessons by still pictures is the more common practice and also from the point of view that the handling of still pictures is generally a simpler process than cinema projection, there is nothing to be said against the views expressed; but the articles seem to me to imply that the cinema used in school is to be regarded as a development of the still picture to be used along conservative lines, being introduced into class-room lessons in ways which have proved effective with the still picture. It is this implication which appears to me to call for further comment.

In the past I have had opportunity to witness many lessons given by teachers who used films to illustrate matter they were teaching. Sometimes only sections of films were shown, often advantage was taken of the still picture device to throw a still on the screen while the teacher led the attention of his pupils to various points which he wanted them specially to observe. The illustrations were well chosen; they were skilfully introduced and the lessons were undoubtedly successful. The part played by the films was to provide illustration and in that direction little was achieved which still pictures skilfully used could not have achieved equally well. To use the cinema to provide such illustration is not economic. That is not to say that there never is a time when the

film is the appropriate and economic illustration. In any subject where motion or growth must be studied carefully films are invaluable for illustration and some excellent short ones have been produced specifically for that purpose.

Two Classes

In my view there are at least two classes of good teaching films. (I am sorry there is not time to define that phrase to some extent, at least.) One of these, consisting of those films which deal with a single topic, like some of those produced by Gaumont British Instructional, can be safely entrusted with the actual "presentation" of the new material of a lesson. Of course, the commentary has got to be within the understanding of the class, and many classes have first to be taught to listen to a mechanical voice. The teacher has first to prepare the children to receive the new material and after the film has presented it—preferably, in my view, without any interruption on the part of the teacher—he has to put forth all his skill to ensure assimilation by the individual members of the class. The other group, consisting generally of documentaries, ought to be classified with school journeys and educational visits rather than with illustrative material. Such films provide the children, if well presented, with what is to them something very nearly akin to an actual experience through which they have lived, yielding many vivid impressions, providing the basis of many subsequent lessons. Again the skill of the teacher is called for in leading his pupils to that experience and ensuring that they get the fullest benefit from it. In this case that cannot be done in any single lesson.

There are other films which provide useful introductions to or revisions of

single lessons or whole courses.

Never can a film be a substitute for a teacher. However they are used in connection with the teaching of children they always need skilful handling. The teacher who only uses films as he would use still pictures is denying himself a considerable part of the valuable aid good films can give to the process of education.

Of course the number of good films is still too small and it sometimes

happens that a film which a teacher has ordered without previous personal knowledge of it, intending it to play a considerable part in his scheme of teaching, fails so dismally to provide what he expected it to, that he finds he can use only short extracts from it to provide illustrations for some limited application in the course of a lesson. His skill has directed him to degrade that film from a vehicle of teaching to a means of illustration.

Austria's Film Future

by C. T. de Jaeger

(Former British representative of the official Austrian newsreel and short films)

WITH THE declaration of the Three Powers at the Moscow Conference regarding the future independence of Austria in post-war Europe, Vienna will undoubtedly become again the recognised centre of art and music on the Continent after the Nazi regime which suppressed Austrian culture has been swept aside. Again as in the past the Vienna Opera and the Salzburg Festivals will delight thousands of music lovers from all over the world with performances of the highest artistic quality. Fresh talent will be able to appear again on the Vienna stage of which the Burgtheater has provided the greatest Austrian actors and actresses for the film at home and overseas. Hollywood has discovered many a star in Vienna like Heddy Lamarr, Erich von Stroheim or Walther Slezak.

Quality not Quantity

Though Austria was never able to boast of a large film industry the artistic quality of its productions made

up for that deficiency. This applied to big features as well as second class films for home and German consumption only. With the advent of the Nazis in Germany, Goebbels, their all-powerful film dictator, fully realised that Austrian film production was successfully competing in foreign markets with Nazi productions which were rejected for their camouflaged propaganda. Furthermore a certain influx of talented German film people who had been driven out of their country by the Nazis, came to Austria to start production.

During 1936 a number of very good films were produced in Vienna which obtained world fame. The leading picture being *Maskerade* with Paula Wessely and Anton Wohlbrück, and *Episode, Burgtheater, Hohe Schule, So Ended a Great Love* were of the same artistic quality, and also much acclaimed by cinema audiences in this country. Of the smaller feature productions from Vienna was *G'schichten aus dem Wienerwald* (Tales

from the Vienna Woods), a light comedy with Magda Schneider and Walther Sleszak against that Viennese background of the "Heuriger" and "Fiakerleben" which has always appealed to English visitors who enjoy what is termed in Austria as "Gemuetlichkeit". This film had a very successful run in the London West End.

Production Costs

Nevertheless in Vienna the film producers were struggling hard to keep the industry going. Production costs varied from £35,000 to £45,000 a picture, of which amount 8 per cent of returns came from the Austrian distribution with its 860 cinemas, and the remaining 92 per cent had to be covered from foreign sales, whereby the German market provided the bulk sums. An Austrian producer could reckon on £30,000 guarantee from the German distributor, provided it was "zugelassen", i.e. was in accordance with the Nazi Aryan paragraph. Returns from the rest of the Continent made up for profits whereby English-speaking countries did not account for any large amounts.

Thus the Austrian producer was financially dependent on the returns from the German market, and Goebbels was fully aware of that fact. He controlled UFA with its studios, distribution organisation and cinemas which reached far outside the Reich, in addition to Tobis Klangfilm which had the recording monopoly on the Continent. Without Tobis Sound System no producer could make a film, and by charging high recording fees film costs were greatly increased.

Goebbels Guile

In 1936 film relations between Austria and Germany came to such a state that the Germans were importing their pictures and Austrian films were refused import licences. The situation was not very satisfactory to

Goebbels either, so an Austro-German film exchange agreement was signed after negotiations in March, 1936. As a result of this Austria could export fourteen films per annum to Germany without a ticket. That meant they received the same distribution advantages as German home film productions which greatly affected the returns. Over and above that amount all Austrian films were treated as foreign. Credits for film sales were "frozen" and adjusted according to the private clearing which took considerable more time than the official clearing. Exhibition of pictures in each country subject to censorship and the Aryan Clause in respect to Germany. Germany's film imports to Austria were unlimited. In 1936 the Germans imported under this agreement 112 films into Austria.

At first the arrangement appeared to work until Austrian producers found they had considerable sums of money tied up in Germany, the release of which was being delayed by the Nazi Reichsbank authorities. In this manner Goebbels achieved his aim in completely limiting Austrian film production at a time when she needed it most to counteract Nazi propaganda which was secretly flooding the country and polluting the minds of the Austrian people.

Goebbels and his Reichsfilmkammer told Austrian producers they could have 10 per cent of returns in cash and the remaining 90 per cent has to be in kind which included employment of German film stars, technicians and writers, studio credits advanced through Tobis, raw film stock from AGFA, or the purchase of German pictures. But the 10 per cent Austrian film credit, meanwhile accumulated in Germany, came to about £100,000 which would have sufficed to continue production in Vienna, but it was not forthcoming from the Nazi coffers.

As regards the so-called "emigrant" production, films made without regard

for the Aryan clause, one picture *Fraulein Lilli* with Francisca Gaal was attempted, but was a disastrous failure. Another one, *The Parson of Kirchfeld*, because of its peasant background, was quite successful in Austria and especially Switzerland for which audiences it catered. But it was to be the last production of its kind in Austria.

The 1937 Crisis

In 1937 the film crisis had broken in on Austria. The studios were closed and the staff out of work. Various attempts of producers to get government backing in form of subsidies or a film bank failed as those government departments either couldn't or didn't want to see the importance of Austrian films on the world film market. Undoubtedly Goebbels exercised the necessary pressure to forestall any such assistance.

The only remaining productive firm was Selenophon which made shorts of an Austrian propaganda and education value as well as an officially-sponsored bi-weekly newsreel which every cinema in Austria had to show. Attempts at one or two small productions were made at its Schoenbrunn studios by independent producers. The dubbing of foreign film into German at its Rennweg studios in Vienna was another activity. Otherwise the independent Rosenhuegel and Sievering Studios were at a standstill.

With the Nazi invasion of Austria the first thing the Reichsfilmkammer under direction of Goebbels did was to close down Selenophon and immediately stop the production of the Austrian newsreel. The Tobis concern took over all assets and part of the staff. Feature film production was restarted under Nazi auspices in the Rosenhuegel Studios outside Vienna, and has been going on since with German production units and stars.

The Future

Looking into the future of post-war Austria the film industry there will come into its own again. Its job will be to fill that gap which will arise through cessation of Nazi film production in Germany itself and provide entertainment of a new type to Continental audiences who for years have been obliged to see Nazi propaganda and anti-British hate drummed into them.

As to subject matter Austria need not worry for there is and will be abundant material available on the country's past and future, set against a beautiful and natural Alpine background as well as a musical setting. As British producers in the past have availed themselves of that atmosphere for the films, so the post-war era might see them back again to shoot exteriors for British productions.

It is quite feasible that more world history may be again written in Vienna and that Austria itself will yet play an important part in the destruction of Nazism. Austria's film industry has an important post-war future and its aim must be to continue the production which was forcibly stopped by the Nazis because Viennese producers had shown to the world that in artistic quality and presentation their films could beat those of Goebbels.

A Fresh Market

Austria, too, will present to the British producer a new market for his productions and be welcomed to audiences out there who will want to see something of England and its life which for the past six years has been presented to them in distorted fashion by the Goebbels propaganda. But that Austrians believe him is another question, for the link between the British and Austrians has always been close. It will be the medium of the film which in post-war Europe will weld this friendship even closer.

SOME NOTES AND NEWS

British Film Institute

The British Film Producers' Association has appointed Mr. W. Glenvil Hall, M.P., to be their representative on the Governing Body in place of Mr. Paul Kimberley, C.B.E., A.R.P.S., whose term of office has expired. Mrs. Cazalet Keir, M.P., has tendered her resignation from the Governing Body to the President of the Board of Trade.

Youth Organisations all over the country are evincing an increasing interest in films.

Should any reader of SIGHT AND SOUND be willing to speak to youth organisations on such subjects as Film Appreciation or the Canons of Film Criticism, Mr. Oliver Bell, the Director of the British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C. 1, will be most happy to receive their names.

The Education Panel of the Institute is giving attention to the design of school buildings from the point of view of the installation of visual aids. In due course it is hoped to send a memorandum to the President of the Board of Education as well as to the interested departments in Local Authorities. One novel suggestion is for a sliding blackboard combined with rear projection apparatus for films and stills.

In conjunction with Mr. Meredith, the Lecturer in Visual Education in the University College of the South-West, the Institute has been considering a scheme of research to establish certain basic principles of visual educational method.

National Film Library

The Preservation Section has discovered how quickly film deteriorates once it has started. This is a most disturbing fact. Of seventy-five films which were examined six months ago and which showed slight signs of deterioration, it was found that nearly 50 per cent had gone so badly in that period that either they will have to be copied immediately or allowed to go out of existence. Of the 610 other early or pre-1910 films which have been examined about a third have proved unstable. All these titles are now to be considered by the Library's Selection Committee in order to determine whether the films are of sufficient importance to be copied or whether the collection has enough examples of that particular type to enable them to be allowed to go out of existence.

Slow progress is being made in the

compilation of the general index by titles and by subjects. It is a task which needs the time of several workers. At the moment the most that can be hoped is that the indexing assistant will be able to keep pace with the Library's intake, but he will not be able to catch up on existing material.

For some time it has been felt that one of the weaknesses of the Loan Section has been that there has been no modern material available. The Library Committee therefore is seeking an interview with the Trade Organisations in order to see if some agreement cannot be reached whereby subject to certain conditions copies of all or just sections of some modern films cannot be made available for film appreciation purposes. Despite this gap in the material which is available more than 500 films have been borrowed from the Loan Section during the past two months.

Amongst the additions to the Preservation Section are *The Magnificent Ambersons* and the *Pride of the Yankees*, both presented by R.K.O., and *Die Ewige Maske* presented by Mr. Ronald Riley.

Manchester and District Film Institute Society

The autumn session of 1943 was preceded by a showing of Renoir's *Les Bas-Fonds* for which a general invitation was extended to members and non-members alike. The session proper consisted of two 35 mm. shows, *Carnet de Bal* and *Professor Mamlock*, and one 16 mm. show, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. We are glad to be able to record a considerable increase in membership as a result of the session's activities.

We are now looking forward to a visit from Mr. Paul Rotha who will address the Society on the occasion of the showing of his much-discussed film *World of Plenty*. Other films arranged for the spring programme are *Amphitryon*, *Citizen Kane* and *The Emperor of California*.

Merseyside Film Institute Society

At the first show of the new season a poll was taken to assist the Committee in choosing this year's programme.

Out of seven films, *La Fin Du Jour* and *Citizen Kane* took first and second places respectively. Unfortunately it was not possible to book *La Fin Du Jour*. *Hotel Du Nord* was chosen in its place, and shown to the Society on January 15th together with the first in a series of

exciting "orientation" films made by the U.S. War Department—*Prelude to War*. Mr. Oliver Bell was present at this show, and spoke to the audience at both the afternoon and evening performances.

Apart from the film shows announced in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, in November the Society arranged a special show in aid of the Gordon Smith Institute for Seamen, the programme including *Merchant Seamen* and *Ruggles of Red Gap*. The sum of £75 was raised on this occasion.

Shortly before the Christmas holidays the Society also arranged the usual end of term shows of specially selected shorts for Liverpool school children, at which over 6,000 attended. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool was present at one of the shows and spoke to the children, and the Mayor of Bootle was present at another.

Film Council of the South-West

At the Annual General Meeting in November the Secretary made a detailed analysis and interpretation of the work of the Film Council which has now been printed as a booklet under the title "Progress in Visual Education" and is available from the Visual Education Centre, University College, Exeter.

Scottish Film Council

The Scottish Film Council still carries on despite staffing difficulties. The Library has maintained its services; the demand is as great as ever, but owing to the difficulties of film supply no new films are coming on the market and it has been necessary to limit development. Recent negotiations with London have left the hope that it will be possible to obtain enough film stock to maintain the existing position. It will be unfortunate if owing to the exigencies of war this capital film service to Scottish Education has to be restricted through lack of film supply.

In co-operation with Youth Organisations in Scotland a pamphlet has now been prepared on film service for youth and it is shortly to be published by Scottish Youth Leaders' Training Association. Two very successful week-end courses were organised for members of the Polish Forces, at

which were given an intensive course of projector tuition and a series of lectures.

Keeping in step with the formation of the Scientific Film Association in England, a Scottish Committee with complete autonomy, has been established in Scotland. In common with other bodies in Scotland this Committee will work within the ambit of the Scottish Film Council. The other bodies associated with the Council have all had an active season. The Scottish Educational Film Association has been active particularly in the West of Scotland. Many of the branches are now establishing a regular projector tuition course for teachers and issuing at the end of the course certificates of efficiency.

An interesting feature of the season's work has been the development and co-operation between the Film Bodies and the Scottish Library Association, whose committee, working in co-operation with the Ministry of Information Film Officer, have been able to organise in Lanarkshire some fifty centres and at these successful film shows have been regularly given, and have stimulated a great deal of interest among the country people of the remoter districts.

The Workers' Film Association

The Workers' Film Association, Ltd., recently completed its third year of activities. The Secretary-Manager, Alderman Joseph Reeves, was able to report to the members of the Association at the Annual Meeting that trade had increased by £2,466 and had reached the total of £9,193. During the year 16,000 reels of films were distributed.

The Association distributes films for most of the Allied Governments, and negotiations are in progress with the American Government for handling

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American educational films. A number of new Soviet films have been added to the library, including *Lone White Sail*, *In the Rear of the Enemy* and *The Defeat of the Germans near Moscow*, as well as a variety of "shorts", including *Coal*, *Glimpses of Soviet Science* and *Experiments in the Revival of Organisms*.

The Film School this year will be held at the Birmingham University, during the period July 22nd to 29th. An innovation will be a school in Scotland from July 14th to 17th in Edinburgh.

The Central Council for Health Education

After many setbacks good progress is being made with *Round Figures*, a film dealing with the importance of good posture. The treatment is an original one and considerable use is made of trick photography. The characters are "a man in the street", a housewife and a factory girl. To their great indignation they are dissolved into skeletons to illustrate the pernicious effects of their bad posture.

Next upon the Council's list of proposed films comes one upon Breast Feeding for which an excellent treatment has been

prepared by Verity Films. This will be in no way a medical film, but is designed to attract the attention of women both young and old and tries to answer some of the questions asked by the young mother who is rearing her first baby.

The Council's Film Committee has also been invited to draw up a suitable treatment for a health film for adolescents to be made later on by the Ministry of Information.

Bradford Civic Theatre

Revivals of British and American films have formed the programmes at the Bradford Civic Playhouse lately. We had hoped to show *Green Pastures*, surely a unique film which should not be allowed to slide into oblivion, but, too late to substitute anything, we find that the copy is not fit to run.

The Little Foxes was shown to an audience appreciative of its brilliant acting and smooth direction, who enjoyed, too, a programme of National Film Library shorts—*The India-Rubber Head*, *His Phantom Sweetheart* and *The Golf Game and the Bonnet*. In February we are showing *Vessel of Wrath*, with the American

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documentary *A Child Went Forth*, and another National Film Library selection—*Voyage Across the Impossible* and *The Well Washed House*. For the weekly programmes *Serenade* and *Katia* have been revived. We have also shown the commercialised, Anglicised version of *The Bright Path*, which goes under the name of *Tania*.

We should like to know what other film groups think of this dubbing of Russian films. Personally we have been doubtful of its wisdom for some time, and in the case of *Tania* it seems to be an artistic crime. Not only is English dialogue superimposed and the Russian cut out, but the songs are sung by English voices, which in this case fall far short of the quality of the Russian. Does it really help the cause of Russia to withdraw the Russian originals so soon from the market, even if these dubbings are made for the commercial cinema? Here in Bradford there is a definite feeling that it injures rather than helps. We had a growing

audience for Russian films, who appreciated the originals, but will not have the dubbed versions. These days, unless we snap up each film as it is released, we are forced to take dubbed versions, or not have them at all. It would be most interesting to hear the points of view of others.

Colwyn Bay

A series of ten performances at approximately three-weekly intervals is being given between the end of September, 1943, and the beginning of April, 1944. The main films already shown this season have been *Carnet de Bal*, *Lenin in October*, *Le Roi S'amuse*, *Film and Reality*, *The Virtuous Isidore* and *Burgtheater*. The remaining programmes will include *Citizen Kane*, *Masquerade* (Russian) and *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*.

The Society would be glad to exchange programmes with other Film Societies. The Honorary Secretary's address is: The New Film Society, Gwyn Hafod, Greenway, Rhos-on-Sea.

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